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NOTES ON THE RESULTS OF THE COLLEGE ENTRANCE EXAMINATIONS IN LATIN¹

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In one of my favorite books, especially in connection with my study of Vergil, *John Inglesant*, by J. Henry Shorthouse, there occurs the following passage:

The difference between Johnny's former master and his present one was that between a theorist and dreamer, and a statesman and man of the world and critical student of human nature. The Father made Johnny read with him every day, and by his wealth of learning and acquaintance with men and foreign countries made the reading interesting in the highest degree. In this way he read the classics, making them, not dead schoolbooks, but the most human utterances that living men ever spoke; and while from these he drew illustrations of human life when reading Plato—which he did every day—he led his pupil to perceive, as he did more fully when he grew older, that wonderful insight into the spiritual life and spiritual distinctions which even Christianity had failed to surpass. He led him, step by step, through that noble resolve by which Socrates—at frightful odds, and with all ordinary experience against him—maintains the advantage to be derived from truth. . . . He read to him Aristophanes, pointing out in him the opposing powers which were at work in the Hellenic life as in the life of every civilized age. He did not conceal from him the amount of right there is on the popular side of plain common sense, nor the soundness of that fear which hesitates to overthrow the popular forms of truth, time-honoured and revealed, which have become in the eyes of the majority, however imperfect they really may be, the truth itself . . . and he showed him how it might be possible, and even the best thing for mankind, that Socrates should die, though Socrates at that moment was the noblest of mankind: as, afterwards, though for a different reason, it was expedient that a nobler than Socrates should die for the people—nobler, that is, in that he did what Socrates failed in doing, and carried the lowest of the people with him to the ethereal gates.

¹ A paper read at the thirteenth annual meeting of the Classical Association of New England, at Loomis Institute, Windsor, Conn., March 23, 1918.

Those who have read this fascinating romance will recall that the hero was from early youth trained with the utmost care to play a particular rôle in the political and religious life of his times. The boy was to become an effective instrument in the realization of a great purpose, and to this end the classics and, above all, Plato were used to inform his mind and character. Literature was studied, not for its beauty of form and phrase, but to bring him under the sway of noble ideas, nobly and therefore persuasively expressed, and to enlarge his sympathetic comprehension of the many-sidedness of human life. In brief, the function of the classics in the education of this boy was wholly practical, to make of him an accomplished and broad-minded man of the world, who, because he was by instinct and training a gentleman, might be everywhere an acceptable mediator and by the charm of his manner and conversation win support for the party that he represented. *In mores abeunt studia*: this is an ancient idea which experience abundantly confirms. One recalls, for example, that the course in the classics at Oxford which is known as *Litterae Humaniores* rests upon this same belief in the formative power of ideas. It is essentially a course in Greek and Roman thought, not simply in literature as a fine art. It has in view, not so much the acquisition of knowledge, however valuable this may be, as the development of a habit of mind indispensable in business, in the professions, in government—in a word, in all civilized human intercourse. For no civilization, no cultivation, is possible except in so far as the minds of men can be brought to enjoy the constant companionship of ideas, and to prefer the guidance of reason to that of personal likes and dislikes. But in the life of the individual, as of the race, genuine civilization is a plant of very slow growth. As the late Professor James R. Wheeler, himself a fine example of his belief, once admirably said:

Culture is really the blossom which grows from the seed of knowledge—the seed which has germinated in the atmosphere of experience and reflection. Sought after as an end in itself it is an empty thing, and when I hear people asking specifically for “cultural courses,” I generally suspect that what they truly need is something like shopwork. Surely the idea of liberal education goes much deeper than this. It is a very old idea, and it is profoundly ethical in nature, having to do with what Aristotle has called a *ἡθικὴ ψυχὴ*, a spiritual condition, which grows out of the direction and quality of our mental activity,

and which determines our way of looking at things. The man who has fully grasped it will have soberness and righteousness and wisdom, and, like that great poet of antiquity, he will "see life steadily and see it whole."¹

In this connection it may be noted that Matthew Arnold's oft-quoted dictum that conduct is three-fourths of life falls short of the ancient Greek estimate. It would be more nearly correct to say that by the Greeks the whole of life was regarded as a fine art and that the ethical motive was felt to be an element in all its activities.

In the great era of reconstruction, both physical and spiritual, that must follow the present war what shall be the function of classical teaching? Greek and Latin have, we firmly believe, a many-sided usefulness. The study of either, and, better still, of both, can and does, if properly pursued, train the mind in orderly processes of observation and clear reasoning. It can and does, if properly pursued, lead to a more adequate understanding of modern civilization through familiarity with the historical antecedents of this civilization. But I think that we shall fail to avail ourselves of the greatest opportunity ever offered to classicists if we do not in the years now before us do everything that is humanly possible to bring home to the minds of our students the ethical significance of the great classical authors. Now and hereafter all thinking about the progress of mankind must take into account the ominous fact that the greatest and most brutal war in recorded history came in an age distinguished far beyond all others by scientific research and scientific discovery.

In Germany, indeed, as her apologists have justly pointed out, almost every form of public and private activity had become imbued with the spirit of the laboratory. Never before was there such determined, multifarious, and successful effort to advance the boundaries of knowledge and to make new discoveries contribute at once to the material welfare of a nation. In the development of the purely intellectual power thus strikingly displayed in Germany the classics seem to have played a noteworthy part. In the introduction to his recent book, *A Defence of Classical Education*,

¹ "The Idea of a College and of a University," *Columbia University Quarterly* (December, 1907), p. 4.

Mr. R. W. Livingstone has called attention to two facts: "(1) The makers of the greatness of modern Germany are the generations educated before 1900; the vast majority of these were educated in the classical *gymnasium* with its compulsory Latin and Greek. (2) Even in 1911, of over 400,000 boys receiving secondary education in Germany, 240,000 were at schools in which Latin is compulsory, and 170,000 of these at schools where Greek is compulsory also." Mr. Livingstone cites these facts to prove the efficacy of the classics in mental training, in the development of the ability to understand and solve scientific problems. Inasmuch as no sensible man can call in question the value of knowledge and intelligence, these facts must be gratifying to us.

But the present war and the multitudinous discussions which have accompanied its progress have raised again the old, old question whether mankind can work out its salvation through knowledge and intelligence alone. For we are confronted by an obvious fact, though many persons are still so childlike in their mentality that they cannot see it. If A (who is anyone) is determined to force upon B (who is anyone else) a philosophy and ordering of life that are abhorrent to B, then B, in so far as he is a real man, and not, as I once heard a well-known publicist called, a "stuffed shirtfront," must fear and fight A as a person whose power to do deadly harm is in direct proportion to his native ability, his scientific attainments, and his unswerving loyalty to his own convictions. You cannot reason with a closed mind, especially if that mind, conscious of its rectitude, is conscious also of its power to enforce its views; and history teaches only too well the meaning of the words *vae victis*. Belgium has covered herself with undying glory; but that fact has not saved from death or from a life that is worse than death thousands of Belgian men, women, and children. In *Culture and Anarchy*, Matthew Arnold quotes two excellent rules of Bishop Wilson: "First, never go against the best light you have; secondly, be sure that your light be not darkness." Unless one is an incurable egotist—I admit that there are still in the world thousands of this type—this second precept will ultimately lead one into the ways of social open-mindedness and release from slavery to one's own point of view, however sincerely held.

To develop this large sympathy with the tragedy and comedy of human life, to enable one to understand the appeal to others of ideas with which one cannot one's self agree, to help one to incarnate in one's behavior, especially toward opponents, the winning power of one's ideals—this is the true fruit of the study of the great classical writers. It is unfortunately possible, as Germany has conclusively demonstrated, to gain from this study an invaluable mental discipline and knowledge of ancient history, and yet fail altogether to receive that fine tempering of the spirit which is its most precious result.

At the close of the examinations last June one of the readers in his report to me dwelt at some length upon the disturbing fact that on the average not much more than one-half of the candidates in all subjects secured 60 per cent or higher. He closed by saying: "I feel more and more every year that it is not the intellectual part that fails so much as it is the moral training in a broad sense. Results are poor in earnestness, ambition, persistence, etc. That is what makes the trouble." This diagnosis seems to me to be sound. It may perhaps be urged in extenuation that we have in America what Sir Michael Sadler once wittily called a "pedocracy," and that it is by no means easy to convince our young rulers of the practical value of our teaching for their daily lives. Latin, in particular, appears to be somewhat remote, and they bear with our instruction rather out of courtesy than because of any real belief. But the horrors of this war are making even young minds serious, and if the arguments that I have been presenting to you are valid we may justly entertain a lively hope of being able to commend them *virginibus puerisque*. We are fortunate in the two authors whom we study with them intensively. For Cicero was, in the words of Augustus as Plutarch records them, "Λόγιος ἀνὴρ, ὦ παῖ, λόγιος, καὶ φιλόπατρις," "A great orator, my child, a great orator, and a man who loved his country," and of Vergil, Bacon's description is still true, "The chastest poet and the royalest that to the memory of man is known." But let us never forget that the most effective way to propagate the spirit of liberalism is to express it in one's own daily life and conversation, both in and out of the classroom.

In his essay "On the Training of Children" Plutarch quotes a saying of Democritus: λόγος γὰρ ἔργου σκῆῃ, "the word is the shadow of the deed." One may grant the close association and yet note that words, like shadows, have a fatal power to obscure at times the real situation. One need not go outside of the apologetics of the present war to find warrant for the supposition that inability to frame a plausible argument in support of any contention whatever indicates a certain lack of brains. But dangerous as words are constantly proving themselves to be, we cannot dispense with their use. Prudence, therefore, as well as idealism, urges insistently the study of words and their uses. I commend again to your prayerful meditation, as I did last year,¹ the value of working in concert with the teachers of English. The Board's entrance examination in English literature is based upon two most interesting lists of books, with all of which we teachers of Latin should be acquainted. It would at least be easy for us to make ourselves quite familiar with the particular books in these lists that were being studied in the English classroom by the members of our classes in Latin. We could then by explicit references and quotations co-ordinate the work of the two classrooms, making clear to our pupils the availability of their English reading for the translation of Latin into English. Through this definite and detailed use of the English lists we should presently be able to prove to our colleagues that we were giving them effective help. I venture to believe that they would be most appreciative. It is perhaps unnecessary to add that if, instead of convincing *ourselves*, we could convince *them* of the value of Latin for English diction and style by such practical demonstrations we should gain very powerful support for our subject in the high-school course.

There is, of course, encouraging evidence that good work of this general kind is already being done. Let me give you some renderings of parts of the passage from the *Aeneid* set last June for translation at sight:

"Aurora, meanwhile, had ushered in for miserable mortals the blessed light, bringing back tasks and hardships."

¹ "Lessons to Be Learned from the Results of the College Entrance Examinations in Latin," *Classical Journal*, XII (1917), 575-84.

"Meanwhile Aurora had revealed her kindly light to unhappy mortals, bringing back their work and their hardship."

"Many are the bodies of the cattle that are sacrificed to Death, and they slaughter at the fire bristly boars and sheep taken from all the fields."

"Thrice about the blazing fires girt in shining arms they wheeled, thrice the sad funereal fires they rounded upon their chargers and raised a cry of lamentation. Sprinkled is the earth with tears and sprinkled also are their arms; there rises to heaven the warrior's wail and the trumpet's shrill voice."

Consider the pleasure that this last example gave to a reader who had got wearily accustomed to renderings like this:

"Thrice all ran down the burned piles with gleaming arms, three times they showed the sad funeral fire to the horses and gave a yell from their mouth. Both the earth is spattered with tears and the arms are scattered about. It goes to heaven and the clamor of men and the braying of trumpets rises."

If in these examinations the translations, on the whole, are acceptable rather for their accuracy than because of any noticeable literary quality, what shall we say of spelling? One of the readers sent me the following list: torchered, gaurd, goddess, growning, emperers, sacrafice, proberbly, snached, egar, emphysises. The new New York state syllabus for the first two years of Latin lays very great stress upon the relation of Latin words to their English derivatives, and we are all familiar with the valuable work which Mr. Albert S. Perkins is doing in the Dorchester High School. Here, beyond question, is a second field in which we can earn the gratitude of our colleagues in English by helping them to solve one of their most difficult problems. The phenomena of the life and growth of language, if they are properly presented to young minds, are surely as entertaining as the life and growth of plants; and this knowledge is far more relevant to the practical needs of daily life. Let me plead again, as I have done in the past, for greater attention to the family relationships of words. Last June, within the area of Latin itself, 154 candidates out of 388 could not form from the verb *audivisse* a Latin noun denoting the agent, and 69 out of the same number were unable to explain at all the derivation of *civitas*. Yet the knowledge called for was of the most elementary character.

Through the kind co-operation of Professor Fiske and the office of the Board I am again able to present to you several tables of

statistics. They are entirely similar in their general character to those of the last three years. The first table indicates, as heretofore, the relative proficiency in prepared work and in sight work of the candidates who offered 4 (Cicero and sight) and 5 (Vergil and sight). The supplementary sections (Table IA, p. 666) are concerned with those candidates who *pass in one part only* and owe their ultimate success or failure in the examination as a whole to the greater power of the part in which they pass or fail. Table IA therefore presents in another form the results already indicated in the last four columns of Table I (p. 666). You will note that a trifle under three-fourths of the candidates in Cicero and in Vergil pass, if competent, in both parts independently, but, if incompetent, fail in both parts independently. In 1914 and 1915 this was true of almost exactly three-fourths of the candidates in both subjects, and in 1916 of 65 per cent in Cicero and almost 84 per cent in Vergil. This substantial agreement for four successive years seems to me rather striking and encouraging. If now we consider the candidates who passed in one part only, the figures for 1917 are so strikingly different from those for the previous years as to suggest the question, Were the sight passages perhaps too easy, or was the prepared work somewhat hurriedly done in order to gain time to develop the power to translate at sight?

In considering the comparative success of the candidates in dealing with prescribed work and with sight translation, we should not forget that questions on the subject-matter form an important part of the first half of the paper. It is clear from the figures in Table II (p. 667) that the performance in this part of the examinations last June was not very encouraging, especially when I remind you that the group of pupils here represented is formed, as in previous years, of the candidates sent by several schools whose records in Latin as a whole are very good. Let me add some figures indicating the treatment of the questions without reference to such a special group. In the following questions the number of answer-books stated after each question received no credit at all.

On Cicero *Pro lege Manilia* 65, 66 (1,390 candidates):

What objections to the appointment of Pompey had been urged by Catulus and Hortensius? How does Cicero meet these objections? 362.

TABLE I

	Passed Parts I and II		Failed Parts I and II		Part I Passed Part II Failed Passed on Whole		Part I Passed Part II Failed Failed on Whole		Part II Passed Part I Failed Passed on Whole		Part II Passed Part I Failed Failed on Whole	
	1914	1915	1916	1917	1914	1915	1916	1917	1914	1915	1916	1917
LATIN 4. 1,379 CANDIDATES												
Number.....						577	430		46	38	170	118
Percentage.....						41.8	31.2		3.3	2.8	12.3	8.6
LATIN 5. 1,160 CANDIDATES												
Number.....						565	263		15	9	225	83
Percentage.....						48.7	22.7		1.3	0.8	19.4	7.1

TABLE IA

SUBJECT	PASSED ON WHOLE										FAILED ON WHOLE																			
	Total Number					Success Due to Sight Translation					Success Due to Prepared Work					Total Number					Failure Due to Sight Translation					Failure Due to Prepared Work				
	1914	1915	1916	1917	1918	1914	1915	1916	1917	1918	1914	1915	1916	1917	1918	1914	1915	1916	1917	1918	1914	1915	1916	1917	1918	1914	1915	1916	1917	1918
4.....	150	176	313	216	72	61.9	10.9	78.7	28.0	38.1	89.1	21.3	0	0	0	87	127	372	156	50.6	49.6	95.7	24.4	49.4	50.4	4.3	75.6	0	0	0
5.....	97	120	127	240	84	77.5	63.0	93.7	51.5	22.5	37.0	6.25	0	0	0	54	64	80	92	22.2	31.2	40.0	9.8	77.8	68.8	60.0	90.2	0	0	0

TABLE II

Subject	Number of Candidates	Passed Prescribed Translation	Passed Questions	Passed Sight Translation	Passed P. T. and Q.	Failed P. T. and Q.	Passed P. T. Failed Q.	Failed P. T. Passed Q.	Passed P. T. 40-59 in Q.
4.....	215	91.2	53.0	80.3	52.1	7.9	39.1	0.9	28.4
5.....	161	87.0	46.6	88.8	46.6	13.0	40.4	0.0	31.7

TABLE III
ALL CANDIDATES

Subject	Number				60-100				0-49				50-59			
	B	7S	11S	16S	B	7S	11S	16S	B	7S	11S	16S	B	7S	11S	16S
1.....	1,197	133	196	248	57.6	90.2	87.2	86.3	17.3	4.5	4.6	5.2	25.0	5.3	8.2	8.5
2.....	922	99	152	222	58.2	90.0	88.2	84.7	12.5	5.0	5.9	9.0	29.3	5.0	5.9	6.3
3.....	1,738	225	325	485	50.6	89.8	88.0	80.8	14.8	3.5	5.2	10.5	34.5	6.7	6.8	8.7
4.....	1,618	147	221	343	58.6	78.2	78.7	77.3	14.4	8.9	7.7	9.3	27.0	12.9	13.6	13.4
124.....	541	69	93	106	54.9	94.2	91.4	90.6	14.2	2.9	3.2	3.8	30.9	2.9	5.4	5.6
5.....	1,321	111	200	289	68.2	85.6	82.0	83.4	11.0	8.1	9.0	8.0	20.8	6.3	9.0	8.6
6.....	1,021	92	139	171	55.1	84.8	72.7	75.4	13.2	7.6	15.1	13.5	31.6	7.6	12.2	11.1

Explain the point of the distinction made in the last sentence of this passage between *imperatoris aut legati* and *tribuni militum*. 629.

On Cicero *Pro Archia* 26, 27 (1,390 candidates):

Explain briefly Cicero's argument in this passage. 503.

Who was Ennius? For what was he famous? 401.

What two contrasts are made in the sentence beginning with *Quare*? 467.

On Vergil *Aeneid* i. 469-78 (672 candidates):

What is the connection of this passage with the story of Book i? 214.

What story is referred to in *priusquam . . . bibissent*? 324.

On Vergil *Aeneid* iv. 465-73 (398 candidates):

What is the connection of this passage with the story of Book iv? 119.

Tell briefly the two tragic stories referred to in 469-73. 207.

Who are meant by Tyrios? 148.

On Vergil *Aeneid* vi. 867-74 (274 candidates):

About whom is Anchises speaking? 127.

Rewrite *ne quaere* in the form of expression which is most common in prose. 89.

In what way was Rome the *Mavortis urbs*? 130.

Why did Vergil put into his epic the story of Book vi? 53.

The scansion of two simple verses was asked for. Only 205 candidates out of 757 received full credit, and 184 made such mistakes that they received no credit at all. Yet this is the one and only question whose presence on the paper in Vergil is absolutely certain.

Were there then no answers which showed that the writer could think? Let me give you a few which cheered us:

"Pentheus, king of Thebes, because he refused to allow the worship of Bacchus was made to see double by that god and was finally torn to pieces by his mother and sisters at a Bacchic revel."

"Orestes, son of Agamemnon, murdered his mother Clytemnestra to avenge his father whom she had killed. He was pursued by the furies for a long time, but was finally judged innocent by the council of the Areopagus at Athens. Minerva cast the deciding vote in his favor. Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides have all written on this theme."

"Eumenides was a euphemistic name given to the Furies to appease them. It means kindly-minded ones."

"Eumenides—a word of Greek derivation meaning the 'well wishers.' The ancients had this name for the Furies because they feared to anger them by calling them their real names. The Eumenides correspond most nearly to the modern conscience."

"The word Eumenides means well-wishers, the exact opposite of what the Furies were. The ancients called the Furies Eumenides because they thought

by calling them that name they would ward off their wrath, just as one says 'nice doggie' to an ugly brute coming at him."

"Vergil must have had many reasons for introducing into his epic the story of Book vi. The book serves to acquaint the people of the age with life after death. It shows the various punishments of the wicked and the blessings of the good. Vergil here shows how closely he can imitate Homer in Homer's book the *Odyssey*. The book serves as a very interesting diversion in the main story. It gives Vergil an opportunity to praise the glory of Rome and its rulers, and thus obtain honor for himself. Here he flatters Augustus Caesar, so that on the whole the story of Book vi was written with many purposes."

In this connection I wish to express the concern of the readers at the persistence of the idea that Vergil "flattered" Augustus.

In Table III (p. 667), of which I now ask your consideration, you will find the Board's general figures for Latin (all candidates) set in comparison with the combined record of seven, eleven, and sixteen schools whose candidates as a whole achieved marked success. With one exception, due to the substitution by one of the sixteen schools of the comprehensive for the regular examinations, the schools are the same that were represented in this table last year. The figures given under the caption B are taken from Professor Fiske's report for 1917.

Certain things are clear. In the first place, the percentages of the groups of schools are in substantial agreement with one another, and are all far higher than the general percentages of the Board. In the second place, the number of candidates sent by the group of sixteen is, in each examination subject, a very considerable fractional part of the total number examined by the Board in that subject. As this table has told the same tale for four successive years, it is, I think, quite clear that under favorable educational conditions it is possible for the schools to attain notable success in the examinations of the Board.